

# Connect Suicide Prevention Project



**A National Best Practice Program**



## Strategies for Engaging Traditional News Media and New Media/Technology in Promoting Safe Messaging About Suicide

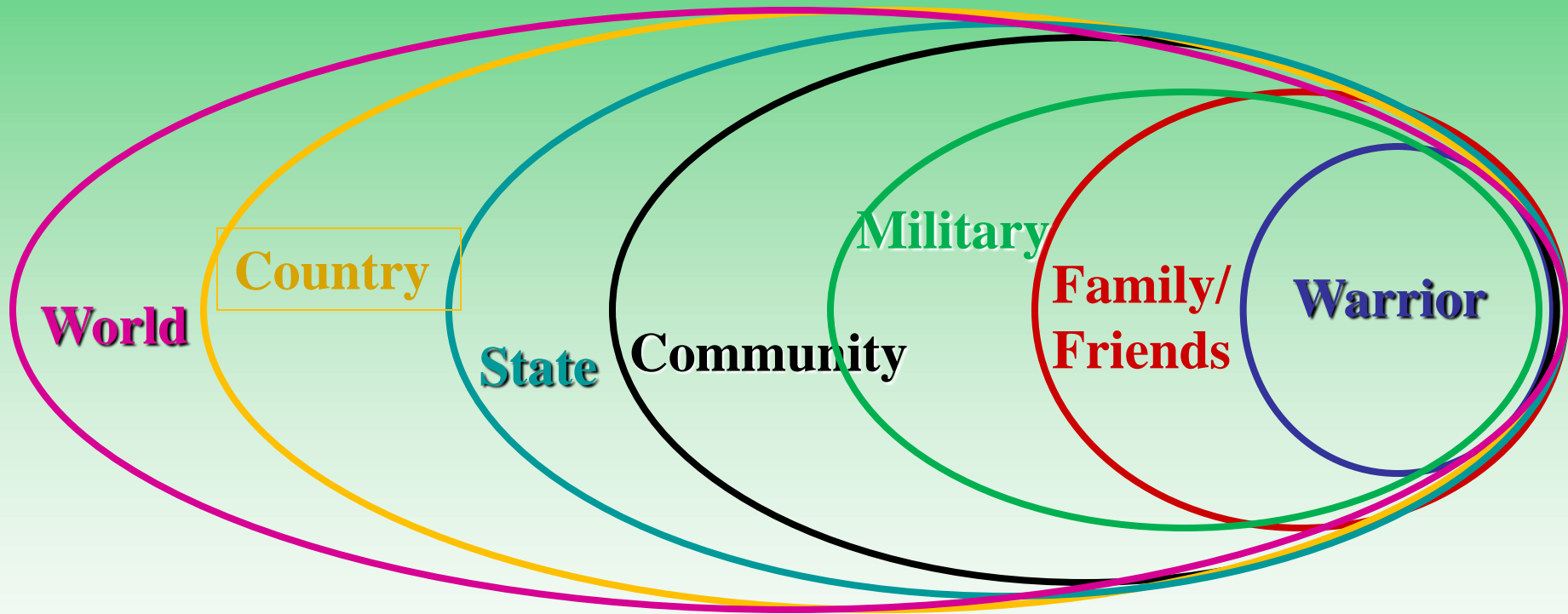
DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference 2011



Copyright NAMI NH, 2010. Do not use printed or web version of this document for other than personal use without permission from NAMI NH

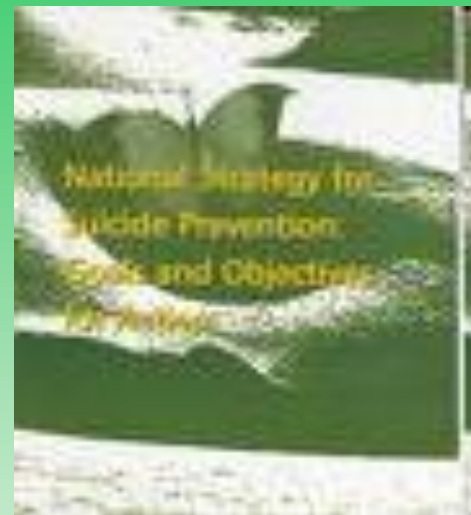
# Impact of Media/New Media

## Ecological Model



# National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSSP)

- Followed Surgeon General's report of 1999
- Published in 2001
- Goal 9 "Improve reporting and portrayals of suicidal behavior, mental illness and substance abuse in the entertainment and news media"



# Research Finds Suicide By Readers Or Viewers May Increase When:

- The number of stories about individual suicides increases.\*
- A particular death is reported at length or in many stories.\*
- The story of an individual death by suicide is placed on the front page or at the beginning of a broadcast.\*
- The headlines about specific suicide deaths are dramatic

\*Reporting on Suicide: Recommendations for the Media; US CDC; 2001

# Safe Reporting - What to Avoid:

- Detailed descriptions of the suicide
  - including specifics of method/location
- Romanticizing or glamorizing person/death
- Oversimplifying causes
- Overstating the frequency of suicide
- Using suicide in the headline
- Giving prominent placement to the story



## Army reports record number of suicides for June

Updated 2d 21h ago | Comments [479](#) | Recommend [13](#) | E-mail | Save | Print | Reprints & Permissions | [RSS](#)

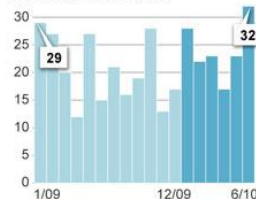


Enlarge By Chris Hondros, Getty Images

There were 32 confirmed or suspected suicides among soldiers in June, including 21 among active-duty troops and 11 among National Guard or Reserve forces, according to Army statistics.

### ARMY SUICIDES

In June, the number of confirmed and suspected suicides in the Army topped those of previous months.



Source: U.S. Army  
By Julie Snider, USA TODAY

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

Soldiers killed themselves at the rate of one per day in June, making it the worst month on record for Army suicides, the service said Thursday.

There were 32 confirmed or suspected suicides among soldiers in June, including 21 among active-duty troops and 11 among National Guard or Reserve forces, according to Army statistics.

Seven soldiers killed themselves while in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan in June, according to the statistics. Of the total suicides, 22 soldiers had been in combat, including 10 who had deployed two to four times.

"The hypothesis is the same that many have heard me say before: continued stress on the force, said Army Col. Christopher Philbrick, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force. He pointed out that the Army has been fighting for nine years in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Last year was the Army's worst for suicides with 244 confirmed or suspected cases.

**DATABASE:** A look at U.S. lives lost in Iraq, Afghanistan  
**AFGHANISTAN:** Coalition eases up on airstrikes  
**GENERAL:** Sees IED drop by year's end

The increase was a setback for the service, which has been pushing troops to seek counseling. Through May of this year, the Army had seen a decline in suicides among active-duty soldiers this year compared with the same period in 2009.

Philbrick expressed frustration over the June deaths. "Because we believe that the programs, policies, procedures ... are having a positive impact across the entire force. The help is there."

A leading military suicide researcher says changing a culture that views psychological illness as a weakness takes time.

"I would expect it to be years," said David Rudd, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

The mounting stress on an Army facing renewed deployments and combat in Afghanistan is also a factor, Rudd said. "That's not a challenge they (Army leaders) control. It's a challenge that the president and Congress controls," he said.

The Army also unveiled on Thursday a training video designed to combat suicides. It contains testimonials by soldiers who struggled with self-destructive impulses before seeking help. It is titled *Shoulder to Shoulder: I Will Never Quit on Life*.

Philbrick said this was an improved video that he hoped would reach troubled soldiers. The previous video did not resonate with average soldiers, he said. During a showing in Baghdad, soldiers laughed at it, Philbrick said. "In grunt language, it sucked," he said.

The Army's current suicide rate is about 22 deaths per 100,000, which is above a civilian rate that has been adjusted to match the demographics of the Army. That rate is 18-per-100,000. Only the Marine Corps has a higher suicide rate, at 24-per-100,000. Although Marine Corps suicides had been tracking similarly to last year's record pace, the service reported only one suicide in June.

Just among Guard and Reserve soldiers, suicides have occurred at a higher rate this year than last year, according to Army figures. There have been 65 confirmed or suspected cases this year, compared with 42 for the same period last year.

### Featured video



**Lohan update**  
Attorney, Actress is scared but resolute.



**Turbulence**  
30 hurt as flight hits severe turbulence.



**Oil spill**  
Witnesses skip blast hearing, cap OK so far.

[More: Video](#)

### Daily Briefing E-mail Newsletters

#### Sign up to get:

- Nation's top news
- Money, Sports, Life, Travel, Tech and more



Sign Up Now



## Army Suicide June Rate More than One a Day

CBNNews.com

Sunday, July 18, 2010



Embed: `<embed src="http://downloads.cbn.com/`

Link: `http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/healthscier`

The Army has reported a record number of suicides in June at a rate of more than the month's number of days.

Officials said there were 32 confirmed or suspected suicides last month -- 21 of them among active duty troops.

Seven soldiers killed themselves during combat in Iraq or Afghanistan and of the 32 suicides, 10 of the soldiers had been deployed two to four times.

Ret. Army Maj. Gen. Robert Dees heads up the group *Military Ministry*. Dees told CBN News the Army needs to do more to incorporate faith in their suicide prevention programs.

"God's world is relevant to every issue of life and

I think it's relevant to suicide prevention... it's relevant to encourage hope and optimism during these difficult time of nine years of persistent warfare," Dees said.

"Faith makes a difference in depression and post traumatic stress disorder and suicide prevention," he explained. "And those are decades of studies in respected medical journals."

The Army saw it's worst year for suicides in 2009, with 244 confirmed or suspected deaths.

*\*Originally broadcast on July 16, 2010.*

[+ More](#)
[Recommend](#)
2

### CBN IS HERE FOR YOU!

Are you seeking answers in life? Are you hurting? Are you facing a difficult situation?

Find peace with God, discover more about God or send us your prayer request.

Call The 700 Club Prayer Counseling Center at  
1 (800) 759-0700, 24 hours a day.

A caring friend will be there to pray with you in your time of need.



WATCH NOW



Ad Feedback

E-MAIL

RSS

FEEDBACK

Sign up for the **CBN News Dispatch** and receive CBN News Reports in your inbox each day.

**Subscribe Now >>**

### CBN NEWS TOP STORIES

- [USDA Reconsiders Sherrod Resignation](#)
- [In the Line of Duty: Police Deaths Up in 2010](#)
- [VH Mortgage Aid Program Still Losing Homeowners](#)
- [IDF Responds to Goldstone Report](#)
- [Website Lets You Vote to Cut Gov't Programs](#)
- [Lesbian Teen Awarded \\$35K Over Canceled Prom](#)

### BLOGS

#### The Brody File

The Brody File to Interview Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid This Weekend

#### Beltway Buzz

Rep. Bachmann: R-E-S-P-E-C-T for Tea Party

#### Jerusalem Dateline

Israel Race for the Cure

#### Stakelbeck on Terror

Stak on Terror In Person and Around The Web

#### Hurd on the Web

Left-Wing Media Covers For Obama, Again.

#### Boots on the Ground

This Is How We Win?

#### Healthy Living

Eliminating Sugar From Your Diet

You are here: [Home](#) / [Top News](#) / [U.S. News](#) / [Army suicides reach record](#)

## U.S. News

View archive | RSS Feed  
Receive Free UPI Newsletter

# Army suicides reach record

Published: July 16, 2010 at 11:59 AM

[Article](#) [Listen](#) [Comments](#)

WASHINGTON, July 16 (UPI) -- The number of U.S. Army soldiers who committed suicide hit a record in June, statistics reveal.

The Defense Department reported 32 suicides in June -- 21 active-duty troops and 11 National Guard or Reserve forces, making it the worst month on record.

The Army renewed its commitment to suicide prevention and outreach to soldiers who might be at risk at a time when repeat tours of duty have taken a heavy toll on soldiers who have fought during the nine years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, USA Today reported.

"The hypothesis is the same that many have heard me say before: continued stress on the force," Army Col. Christopher Philbrick, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force, told the newspaper.

The Army Thursday unveiled a video, "Shoulder to Shoulder: I Will Never Quit on Life," featuring testimonials by soldiers who overcame self-destructive impulses with help.

The Army has increased prevention efforts as the number of suicides has climbed in recent years and reached a record 244 last year.

In June, the Army said, seven soldiers killed themselves in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan. Ten of those who committed suicide had been deployed two to four times.

Efforts to reduce stigma notwithstanding, a military suicide researcher told USA Today the military continues to view mental illness as a weakness and change won't come quickly.

"I would expect it to be years," said David Rudd, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah.



### Related Stories

- » Army releases January suicide report
- » Army suicides up fifth straight year
- » Army embarks on suicide study
- » Army probing apparent jump in suicides
- » Canadian military to focus on suicides
- » Army suicides double 2003 rate
- » Study aims to reduce military suicides

### UPI News Photos

Sen. Goodwin (D-WV) Sworn-in



PM David Cameron visits Washington



Broadway at the White House



2010: War in Afghanistan



### Most Popular

[Stories](#) [Photos](#) [People](#) [digg™](#)

1. Food bank mistakenly gives out dog food
2. Report: Egypt's Mubarak dying of cancer
3. 3-year-old reads, gives medical advice
4. Police: Vodka mocking led to shooting
5. Ali Larter pregnant with first child



## Air Force News

[All Air Force News](#)

[Guard & Reserve](#)

[This Week's Issue](#)



[Subscribe to RSS](#)

[Quick Links](#)

[Hall of Valor](#)

[AirForce Discussions](#)

[Frontline Photos](#)

[Honor the Fallen](#)

## WEBTOOLS

[Click here for  
Military Times  
Webtools](#)



Like

12



Tweet

9



SHARE



# As suicides rise, military struggles to respond

By Robert Burns - The Associated Press

Posted : Friday Jun 8, 2012 9:50:24 EDT

WASHINGTON — Suicides are surging among America's troops, averaging nearly one a day this year — the fastest pace in the nation's decade of war.

The 154 suicides for active-duty troops in the first 155 days of the year far outdistance the U.S. forces killed in action in Afghanistan — about 50 percent more — according to Pentagon statistics obtained by The Associated Press.

The numbers reflect a military burdened with wartime demands from Iraq and Afghanistan that have taken a greater toll than foreseen a decade ago. The military also is struggling with increased sexual assaults, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and other misbehavior.

Because suicides had leveled off in 2010 and 2011, this year's upswing has caught some officials by surprise.

## MOST VIEWED STORIES

- Letter prompts base to change flight suit rules
- AF contacted by airman who deserted in 1984
- 8,518 staff sergeants will add a stripe
- Pentagon: Hanscom AFB to retain mission
- Cadet's sex assault court-martial to begin
- Female airmen testify about sex acts with MTIs
- 35 MTIs now gone from Lackland amid scandal
- AF airman charged in death of fellow airman
- Afghan fighters storm NATO base in Kandahar
- Military models have been in Playboy before
- GI Bill overpayment rules unfair, lawmaker says
- Judge bars bearded Hasan from Hood hearing

## Full coverage

Updated 5 hours ago

Top Stories

More sections ▾

Search this story

Go

## All news

Articles

Images

Blogs

Videos

## Any location

Texas

Rhode Island

## Sorted by relevance

Sorted by date

**Suicides of four soldiers in a week stun Fort Hood**Washington Post - [Ann Gerhart](#) - 5 hours ago

Fort Hood's leaders have tried nearly everything to stop the suicides. There are support groups and hotlines, counseling sessions and Reiki ...

[RI soldier in Texas apparently shot himself, wife](#)

Boston Globe - Sep 29, 2010

FORT HOOD, Texas—A soldier from Rhode Island stationed at Fort Hood is suspected of killing his wife and then shooting himself. ...

[Army's largest base reeling from four apparent suicides in one weekend](#)CNN International - [Larry Shaughnessy](#) - Sep 29, 2010

(CNN) -- Four soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas died over the week. In all four cases, it appears the soldiers, all decorated ...

[Four Suicides in a Week Take a Toll on Fort Hood](#)New York Times - [James C. McKinley Jr.](#) - Sep 29, 2010

HOUSTON — Four veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan died this week from what appeared to be self-inflicted gunshot ...

[Fort Hood suicides hit record number](#)

KXAN.com - Sep 29, 2010

Fort Hood authorities are investigating a rash of recent suicides as the Killeen post has hit a record number this year.

[All 47 related articles »](#)

## Blogs

[What we're reading: Fort Hood suicides; international cyber plot; police ...](#)Charleston Gazette (blog) - [Andrew Clevenger](#) - 16 hours ago

In the wake of four apparent suicides over the weekend, including an apparent murder-suicide, officials at Fort Hood in Texas promised to take steps to ...

[0929-Fort Hood: 4 Suicides in One Week](#)

MobileTribune.com (blog) - Sep 29, 2010

It doesn't matter how tough you think you are, the realities of alien worlds outside the United States of America strike their victims - soldiers - with ...

[RI domestic violence group: Ft. Hood murder resonates](#)Providence Journal (blog) - [Thomas J. Morgan](#) - Sep 29, 2010

PROVIDENCE, RI -- The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence issued a statement Wednesday deploring the apparent murder-suicide of Sgt. Michael ...

[All 7 related blogs »](#)

## Texas

[Fort Hood may break record for suicides this year](#)

Houston Chronicle - Sep 28, 2010

© 2010 AP FORT HOOD, Texas — The apparent murder-suicide of a soldier and his wife is among a rash of suspected suicides in recent days at Fort Hood, ...

[2 Fort Hood soldiers killed in Afghanistan](#)

Dallas Morning News - Sep 28, 2010

AP The Defense Department on Tuesday announced the deaths of 40-year-old Sgt. Mark A. Simpson, 40, of Peoria, Ill., and 23-year-old Spc. Donald S. Morrison ...

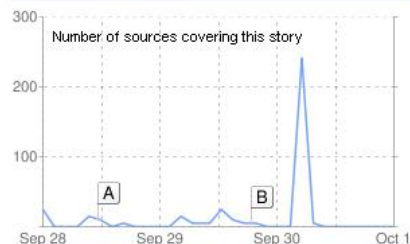
[Fort Hood hit with apparent suicides](#)San Antonio Express - [Sig Christenson](#) - 13 hours ago

Fort Hood's acting commander met with the media Wednesday after a rash of apparent suicides over the weekend claimed the lives of four

## Related

[Fort Hood Suicide Soldier](#) [Michael Timothy Franklin](#)  
[Rhode Island](#)  
[Jessie Ann Franklin](#)

## Timeline of articles



**B** [Four Suicides in a Week Take a Toll on Fort Hood](#)  
 Sep 29, 2010 - New York Times

**A** [Fort Hood reports record number of suicides](#)  
 Sep 28, 2010 - msnbc.com

## Images



CNN International...



Knowelty



WSIL TV



Texas Insider



**Military suicides continue climb**  
 More than 140 active-duty Army soldiers committed suicide in 2009, continuing an upward trend that began in 2004.  
 Suicides: 15 Non-active duty: 88 Active duty: 140

Washington Post



CNN International...



Daily Mail



CBS News



**Military suicides continue climb**  
 More than 140 active-duty Army soldiers committed suicide in 2009, continuing an upward trend that began in 2004.  
 Suicides: 15 Non-active duty: 88 Active duty: 140

San Luis Obispo...

[All related images »](#)

## Videos



[Fort Hood suicides hit record number](#)  
 KXAN.com - Sep 29, 2010

# Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide

[www.reportingonsuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SUICIDE

Developed in collaboration with: American Association of Suicidology, Antares Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Canterbury Suicide Project, University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand, Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, Connecticut Suicide Prevention Task Force, International Association for Suicide Prevention Task Force on Media and Suicide, Medical University of Vienna, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Institute of Mental Health, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UCLA School of Public Health, Community Health Sciences.

### IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COVERING SUICIDE

- More than 50 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration and prominence of coverage.
- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/extensive coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death.
- Covering suicide carefully, even briefly, can change public misperceptions and correct myths, which can encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be informed by using best practices. Some suicide deaths may be newsworthy. However, the way media cover suicide can influence behavior negatively by contributing to contagion or positively by encouraging help-seeking.

References and additional information can be found at: [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.ReportingOnSuicide.org).

**Suicide Contagion or "Copycat Suicide"** occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to another suicide.

#### INSTEAD OF THIS:

- Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide").
- Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.
- Describing recent suicides as an "epidemic," "skyrocketing," or other strong terms.
- Describing a suicide as inexplicable or "without warning."
- "John Doe left a suicide note saying..."
- Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.
- Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.
- Referring to suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful" or a "failed attempt."

#### DO THIS:

- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27").
- Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.
- Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like "rise" or "higher."
- Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the "Warning Signs" and "What to Do" sidebar (from p. 2) in your article if possible.
- "A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner."
- Report on suicide as a public health issue.
- Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.
- Describe as "died by suicide" or "completed" or "killed him/herself."

### AVOID MISINFORMATION AND OFFER HOPE

- Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including psychiatric illnesses, that may not have been recognized or treated. However, these illnesses are treatable.
- Refer to research findings that mental disorders and/or substance abuse have been found in 90% of people who have died by suicide.
- Avoid reporting that death by suicide was preceded by a single event, such as a recent job loss, divorce or bad grades. Reporting like this leaves the public with an overly simplistic and misleading understanding of suicide.
- Consider quoting a suicide prevention expert on causes and treatments. Avoid putting expert opinions in a sensationalistic context.
- Use your story to inform readers about the causes of suicide, its warning signs, trends in rates and recent treatment advances.
- Add statement(s) about the many treatment options available, stories of those who overcame a suicidal crisis and resources for help.
- Include up-to-date local/national resources where readers/viewers can find treatment, information and advice that promotes help-seeking.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR ONLINE MEDIA, MESSAGE BOARDS, BLOGGERS & CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

- Bloggers, citizen journalists and public commentators can help reduce risk of contagion with posts or links to treatment services, warning signs and suicide hotlines.
- Include stories of hope and recovery, information on how to overcome suicidal thinking and increase coping skills.
- The potential for online reports, photos/videos and stories to go viral makes it vital that online coverage of suicide follow site or industry safety recommendations.
- Social networking sites often become memorials to the deceased and should be monitored for hurtful comments and for statements that others are considering suicide. Message board guidelines, policies and procedures could support removal of inappropriate and/or insensitive posts.

**MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES AT:**  
[www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.ReportingOnSuicide.org)

### HELPFUL SIDE-BAR FOR STORIES

#### 1 WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide.

#### 1 WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional

### THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE 800-273-TALK (8255)

A free, 24/7 service that can provide suicidal persons or those around them with support, information and local resources.

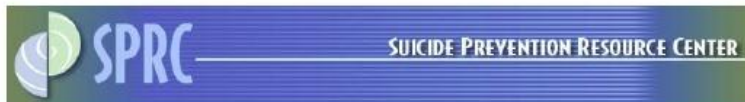




# Safe Reporting – What To Do

- Report on local efforts to prevent suicide
- Include information about warning signs
- Always include information on where/how to get help (local and national) 800-273 TALK (8255)
- Emphasize recent advances in treating mental illness and substance abuse
- Present suicide death as a complex public health issue

# Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)



## Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention

This document offers evidence-based recommendations for creating safe and effective messages to raise public awareness that suicide is a serious and preventable public health problem. The following list of "Do's" and "Don'ts" should be used to assess the appropriateness and safety of message content in suicide awareness campaigns. Recommendations are based upon the best available knowledge about messaging.<sup>1,2,3</sup> They apply not only to awareness campaigns, such as those conducted through Public Service Announcements (PSAs), but to most types of educational and training efforts intended for the general public.

These recommendations address message content, but not the equally important aspects of planning, developing, testing, and disseminating messages. While engaged in these processes, one should seek to tailor messages to address the specific needs and help-seeking patterns of the target audience. For example, since youth are likely to seek help for emotional problems from the Internet, a public awareness campaign for youth might include Internet-based resources.<sup>4</sup> References for resources that address planning and disseminating messages can be found in SPRC's Online Library (<http://library.sprc.org/>) under "Awareness and Social Marketing".

### The Do's—Practices that may be helpful in public awareness campaigns:

- Do emphasize help-seeking and provide information on finding help. When recommending mental health treatment, provide concrete steps for finding help. Inform people that help is available through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK [8255]) and through established local service providers and crisis centers.
- Do emphasize prevention. Reinforce the fact that there are preventative actions individuals can take if they are having thoughts of suicide or know others who are or might be. Emphasize that suicides are preventable and should be prevented to the extent possible.<sup>5</sup>
- Do list the warning signs, as well as risk and protective factors of suicide. Teach people how to tell if they or someone they know may be thinking of harming themselves. Include lists of warning signs, such as those developed through a consensus process led by the [American Association of Suicidology \(AAS\)](#).<sup>6</sup> Messages should also identify protective factors that reduce the likelihood of suicide and risk factors that heighten risk of suicide. Risk and protective factors are listed on pages 35-36 of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#).
- Do highlight effective treatments for underlying mental health problems. Over 90 percent of those who die by suicide suffer from a significant psychiatric illness, substance abuse disorder or both at the time of their death.<sup>7-9</sup> The impact of mental illness and substance abuse as risk factors for suicide can be reduced by access to effective treatments and strengthened social support in an understanding community.<sup>9</sup>

### The Don'ts—Practices that may be problematic in public awareness campaigns:

- Don't glorify or romanticize suicide or people who have died by suicide. Vulnerable people, especially young people, may identify with the attention and sympathy garnered by someone who has died by suicide.<sup>10</sup> They should not be held up as role models.
- Don't normalize suicide by presenting it as a common event. Although significant numbers of people attempt suicide, it is important not to present the data in a way that makes suicide seem common, normal or acceptable. Most people do not seriously consider suicide an option; therefore, suicidal ideation is not normal. Most individuals, and most youth, who seriously

Continued >>

## Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention

- consider suicide do not overtly act on those thoughts, but find more constructive ways to resolve them. Presenting suicide as common may unintentionally remove a protective bias against suicide in a community.<sup>11</sup>
- Don't present suicide as an inexplicable act or explain it as a result of stress only. Presenting suicide as the inexplicable act of an otherwise healthy or high-achieving person may encourage identification with the victim.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, it misses the opportunity to inform audiences of both the complexity and preventability of suicide. The same applies to any explanation of suicide as the understandable response to an individual's stressful situation or to an individual's membership in a group encountering discrimination. Oversimplification of suicide in any of these ways can mislead people to believe that it is a normal response to fairly common life circumstances.<sup>13</sup>
- Don't focus on personal details of people who have died by suicide. Vulnerable individuals may identify with the personal details of someone who died by suicide, leading them to consider ending their lives in the same way.<sup>14</sup>
- Don't present overly detailed descriptions of suicide victims or methods of suicide. Research shows that pictures or detailed descriptions of how or where a person died by suicide can be a factor in vulnerable individuals imitating the act. Clinicians believe the danger is even greater if there is a detailed description of the method.<sup>15</sup>

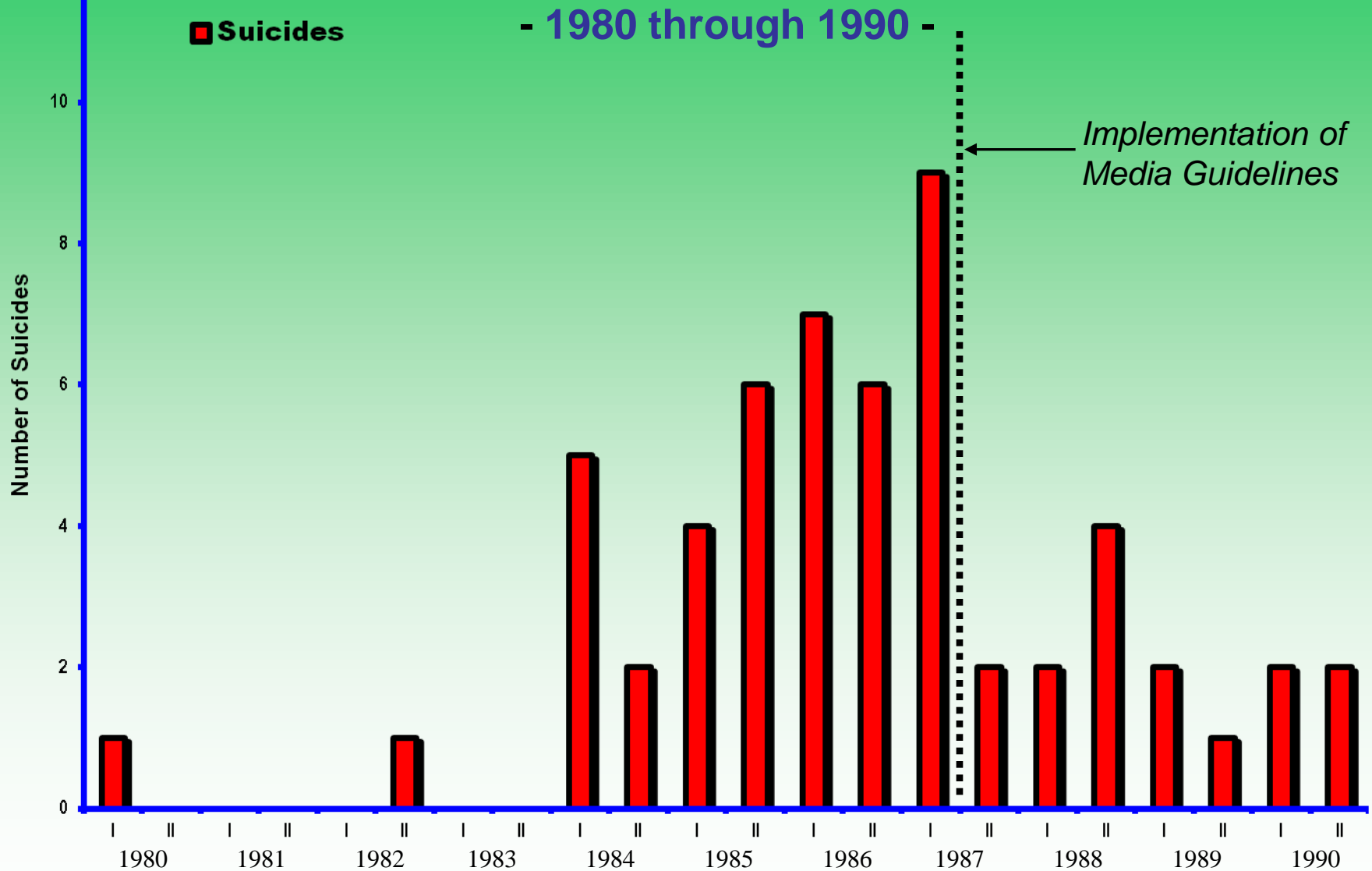
### Acknowledgment

SPRC thanks Madelyn Gould, PhD, MPH [Professor at Columbia University in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (College of Physicians & Surgeons) and Department of Epidemiology (School of Public Health), and a Research Scientist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute] for her extensive contributions and guidance in drafting and editing this document.

- <sup>1</sup> Gould, M. S., Jamieson, P., & Romer, D. (2003). Media contagion and suicide among the young. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46(9), 1269-1284.
- <sup>2</sup> Gould, M. S. (1990). Suicide clusters and media exposure. In S. J. Blumenthal & D. J. Kupfer (Eds.), *Suicide over the life cycle* (pp. 517-532). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- <sup>3</sup> Chambers, D. A., Pearson, J. L., Lubell, K., Brandon, S., O'Brien, K., & Zinn, J. (2005). The science of public messages for suicide prevention: A workshop summary. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 35(2), 124-145.
- <sup>4</sup> Gould, M. S., Velting, D., Kleinman, M., Lucas, C., Thomas, J. G., & Chung, M. (2004). Teenagers' attitudes about coping strategies and help seeking behavior for suicidality. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 43(9), 1124-1133.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *National strategy for suicide prevention: Goals and objectives for action*. Rockville, MD: Author.
- <sup>6</sup> Rudo, M. D., Serman, A. L., Joiner, T. E., Nock, M. K., Silverman, M. M., Mandrusiak, M., Van Orden, K., and Witte, T. (2006). Warning signs for suicide: Theory, research, and clinical applications. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 36(3), 255-262.
- <sup>7</sup> Shaffer, D., Gould, M. S., Fisher, P., Trautman, P., Moreau, D., Kleinman, M., & Flory, M. (1996). Psychiatric diagnosis in child and adolescent suicide. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 53 (4), 339-348.
- <sup>8</sup> Conwell, Y., Duberstein, P. R., Cox, C., Hermann, J. H., Forbes, N. T., & Caine, E. D. (1996). Relationships of age and axis I diagnoses in victims of completed suicide: a psychological autopsy study. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 153, 1001-1008.
- <sup>9</sup> Bideassari, R., Tonio, L., & Hermet, J. (1999). Effects of lithium treatment and its discontinuation on suicidal behavior in bipolar manic-depressive disorders. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 60 (suppl. 2), 77-84.
- <sup>10</sup> Fekete, S., & A. Schmittke. (1995) The impact of mass media reports on suicide and attitudes toward self-destruction: Previous studies and some new data from Hungary and Germany. In B. L. Mishara (Ed.), *The impact of suicide*. (pp. 142-155). New York: Springer.
- <sup>11</sup> Cialdini, R. B. (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105-109.
- <sup>12</sup> Fekete, S., & A. Schmittke. op. cit.
- <sup>13</sup> Moschicki, E.K. (1999). Epidemiology of suicide. In D. G. Jacobs (Ed.), *The Harvard Medical School Guide to suicide assessment and intervention* (pp. 40-51). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- <sup>14</sup> Fekete, S., & E. Maszai. (1990). Hungarian suicide models, past and present. In G. Ferrari (Ed.), *Suicidal behavior and risk factors* (pp. 149-156). Bologna: Mondadori Editore.
- <sup>15</sup> Sonneck, G., Elzarsdorfer, E., & Nagel-Kuess, S. (1994). Imitative suicide on the Viennese subway. *Social Science and Medicine*, 38(3), 453-457.



## EVIDENCE OF MEDIA GUIDELINES' EFFECTIVENESS SUICIDES IN THE VIENNA SUBWAY SYSTEM



I indicates the first six months and II the second six months. The media guidelines of the Austrian Association for Suicide Prevention went into effect in June 1987

## Air Force News

[All Air Force News](#)[Opinions & Columns](#)[Guard & Reserve](#)[This Week's Issue](#)[Subscribe to RSS](#)

[Quick Links](#)  
[Hall of Valor](#)  
[AirForce Discussions](#)  
[Frontline Photos](#)  
[Honor the Fallen](#)

## WEBTOOLS

[Click here for  
Military Times  
Webtools](#)



Like 9 Tweet 8 SHARE ...

## Roy: 'Resiliency' key to stopping suicide

By Mel Gray - Staff writer

Posted : Thursday Feb 17, 2011 21:13:46 EST

ORLANDO, Fla. — Suicide is something the Air Force's top noncommissioned officer admits he doesn't like to talk about, but he is. And he promises to keep talking about it until every airman realizes killing himself is no solution to a problem.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Roy brought his sober message to hundreds of airmen and officers gathered here from across the country Feb. 17 and 18 for the winter meeting of the Air Force Association.

### MORE AFA COVERAGE

- **ACC chief says Gorgon Stare to deploy in March**
- **Head of AFSC wants respect for cyber orders**
- **AETC chief: New trainer to free up fighters**

"It's not one of those subjects you find so enticing to follow a lunch or happy events," Roy explained almost apologetically to his audience.

Roy didn't explicitly mention suicide, though, until almost the end of his 30-minute speech when he showed a videotape of interviews with the parents and friends of Airman 1st Class Austin

Gates Benson, who killed himself May 3, 2010, during a deployment to Afghanistan. Benson was assigned to the 54th Combat Communications Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

"His death came as a shock; his death by suicide crushed us," Joie Gates said of her son, known as G.B. "No one saw it coming."

After Gates Benson killed himself, Robins increased its suicide prevention awareness efforts.

The Air Force, according to Roy, is focusing on four components to prevent suicides — physical, mental, spiritual and social. The program, called Comprehensive Airmen Fitness, is already in place at Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command.

Physical fitness is being improved through the servicewide tougher physical training test standards put in place a year ago, Roy said.

Bases are being creative in addressing the mental and spiritual components, Roy said. MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., has assigned mental health technicians and psychiatrists to units; Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., has a chaplain in its maintenance shop.

Creating a social network, a support system for airmen outside their families, is perhaps the Air Force's biggest challenge, Roy said, because nearly 70 percent of airmen live off base. The task becomes even more daunting when factoring in Guard members, many of whom live hundreds of miles from their units.

"Community," he said, "is so much larger than an installation."

Roy said he believes resiliency is "a lifestyle, a whole process" that the Air Force can initiate on the first day of basic training.

"You take all of those people and the base line is established," he said.

When airmen don't have coping skills, Roy said, they turn to alcohol, become less attentive to their jobs and resort to violence, hurting their children and spouses. Some, like Gates Benson, take their own lives.

In 2010, according to Roy, 100 airmen — on active duty and in the Guard and Reserve — killed themselves. The number of suicides so far this year is higher than it was at this time last year.



[View/Sign Guest Book](#)

### Derek J. Bilodeau



LAS VEGAS -- Derek James Bilodeau, 23, chose to end his life Sept. 1, 2008.

He was born Feb. 25, 1985, in Manchester, N.H., and was a resident of Nevada for seven years.

He was a student at Green Valley High School before he joined the U.S. Army in 2004. He was a member of the 10th Mountain Division (Light) Infantry. He fought in

Afghanistan.

He was awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal with V Device for saving the lives of members of his unit who were trapped in a Humvee. He received the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terror Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Family includes his father and stepmother, Rick and Tricia (Moody) Bilodeau, of Manchester, N.H.; his mother and stepfather, Deborah (Karam) and Michael Florek, of Las Vegas; a brother, Kurt Bilodeau of Los Angeles; a sister, Amanda Bilodeau, of Manchester, N.H.; two half-brothers, Max Bilodeau of Manchester, N.H., and Joshua Florek of Las Vegas; a half-sister, Makenzie Bilodeau of Manchester; two stepbrothers, Philip Florek of Umatilla, Ore., and Bryan Florek of Chicopee, Mass.; his paternal grandfather, Henry Bilodeau, and his maternal grandfather, Albert Karam, both of Manchester; three nieces; one nephew; and several aunts, and uncles.

**SERVICES:** There are no calling hours. A Mass of Christian burial is Saturday at 10 a.m. at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Litchfield, N.H. Internment will follow in St. Augustin Cemetery, South Beech Street, Manchester, N.H.

Memorial donations may be made to The Wounded Warrior Project ([www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)) or to a veterans' support group of your choice.

# Hints and Recommendations When Dealing with Media

# Electronic Media

- Most major media outlets have websites.
- Trend is for less editorial oversight.
- Comments Sections frequently contain inappropriate and potentially harmful comments.

## Positive Action:

- Recommend that Comments Sections be edited or restricted for suicide-related stories.
- Post To Comments Section
- Post warning signs and Military Crisis Line

**1-800-273-8255**





# What is New Media\*

## OLD MEDIA

- One way communication
- Reading Content
- Home Pages
- Web forms

## New Media

- **Interactive communication**
- **Creating content**
- **Communities**
- **Web applications**

\*Christopher Gandin Le - Emotion Technology

# Who Uses New Media?



# Impact of New Media on Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention



## Case Examples

# Email Scenarios



# Texting/Cell Phone



Training Professionals & Communities in  
Suicide Prevention & Response



# IM/Chat as a Suicide Prevention Tool

- Cultural trend is increased comfort with IM/chat than direct f/f or phone hotline
- Suicide Prevention efforts have been slow to respond with IM/chat resources
- Presents technology challenges
- Difficulty with identification and rescue
- VA is first national resource on-line 7/09
- [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



Training Professionals & Communities in  
Suicide Prevention & Response



**WATCH LIVE:** Obama discusses health plan at town hall meeting in N.C.



## Parenting & Family

sponsored by



### Categories

[Food & Wine](#)

[Health](#)

[Pets](#)

[Fashion & Beauty](#)

[Parenting](#)

[Relationships](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Books](#)

[People](#)

[Tech & Money](#)

[Home & Garden](#)

[Weather](#)

[Travel](#)

[Weddings](#)

### Shortcuts

[Concert Series](#)

[Photo Features](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

# Her teen committed suicide over 'sexting'

## Cynthia Logan's daughter was taunted about photo she sent to boyfriend

**By Mike Celizic**

TODAYShow.com contributor

updated 9:26 a.m. ET, Fri., March. 6, 2009

The image was blurred and the voice distorted, but the words spoken by a young Ohio woman are haunting. She had sent nude pictures of herself to a boyfriend. When they broke up, he sent them to other high school girls. The girls were harassing her, calling her a slut and a whore. She was miserable and depressed, afraid even to go to school.

And now Jesse Logan was going on a Cincinnati television station to tell her story. Her purpose was simple: "I just want to make sure no one else will have to go through this again."

The interview was in May 2008. Two months later, Jessica Logan hanged herself in her bedroom. She was 18.

[Story continues below ↓](#)

advertisement | [your ad here](#)

©, TM, © 2009 Kellogg NA Co.

### Video



[Launch](#)

### 'Sexting' leads teen to suicide

March 6: 18-year-old Jesse Logan took her own life after a nude picture of her was passed around by e-mail. TODAY's Matt Lauer talks to her mom, Cynthia Logan, and Internet safety expert Parry Aftab about the dangers of "sexting."

Today show

### Slideshow



[Celebrity daddies](#)

### Sponsored links

**Boston Moms! Lose 42lbs Following 1 Rule**

I Cut Down 42 lbs of Belly Fat in a Month by Obeying this 1 Old Rule...

[RachaelRayBlogging.com](#)

**Boston Moms! Lose 47lbs, Follow 1 Rule!**

I Cut Down 47 lbs of Stomach Fat In A Month By Obeying This 1 Old Rule...

[www.RachelRayBlogs.com](#)

**Boston MOMS: Follow 1 Rule, Lose Weight!**

I Lost 47 lbs of Belly Fat In A Month By Following This 1 Old Rule...

[Rachel-Ray-Blog.com](#)

**ATTN Boston! Mom Got Skinny**

I Slashed 53lbs of Pure Fat Effortlessly by Obeying 1 Old Rule. (Read)

[www.KristinGotSkinny.com](#)

**ATTN: Boston! Lose up to 50lbs from home**

Read my story on how I lost 50lbs using 2 products found

# Webcam





# Phoebe Prince, South Hadley High School's 'new girl,' driven to suicide by teenage cyber bullies

BY HELEN KENNEDY  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Originally Published: Monday, March 29th 2010, 3:58 PM  
Updated: Monday, March 29th 2010, 3:58 PM

The nastiness didn't even end there. Her tormentors posted vicious comments on the dead girl's Facebook memorial page.



Treeger/AP

A candlelight vigil is held at South Hadley, Mass., High School for freshman Phoebe Prince, 15, originally from Ireland, after her suicide in January. Now fellow students are facing charges.

Nine Massachusetts teens were indicted Monday for driving a pretty 15-year-old "new girl" from Ireland to suicide in a case that has become a symbol of high school bullying.

The sweeping charges - which come after months of complaints that the bullies weren't being punished - include statutory rape, violation of civil rights with bodily injury, criminal harassment and stalking.

Phoebe Prince, a new arrival at South Hadley High School from a tiny seaside hamlet in County Clare, was mercilessly tormented by a cadre of classmates later dubbed the "Mean Girls" by Massachusetts newspapers.

"The investigation revealed relentless activity directed toward Phoebe designed to humiliate her and to make it impossible for her to remain at school," District Attorney Elizabeth Scheibel said.



Phoebe Prince

"The bullying, for her, became intolerable."

Students said Phoebe was called "Irish slut" and "whore" on Twitter, Craigslist, Facebook and Formspring.

Her books were routinely knocked out of her hands, items were flung at her, her face was scribbled out of photographs on the school walls, and threatening text messages were sent to her cell phone.

Scheibel said she had drawn the ire of the "Mean Girls" by briefly dating a popular senior football player in her first freshman weeks at the school. One student later said it felt like the whole school ganged up on her.

On Jan. 14, Phoebe was harassed and threatened in the school library and in a hallway, Scheibel said. As she walked home, one of the "Mean Girls" drove by and threw a can of Red Bull at her.

Phoebe walked into her house and hung herself in a stairwell.

The nastiness didn't even end there. Her tormentors posted vicious comments on the dead girl's Facebook memorial page.

For months, community anger simmered that no punishment had befallen Phoebe's bullies. Petitions were signed and town hall meetings held.

Scheibel said her investigators were taking the time to investigate thoroughly, and she slammed "the inexplicable lack of cooperation from Internet service providers, in particular Facebook and Craigslist."

Seven of the nine teens indicted were girls charged with a range of crimes, from criminal harassment to stalking to civil rights violations. A juvenile girl was charged with assault by means of a dangerous weapon - the Red Bull can.

The two males, 17 and 18, were charged with statutory rape.

Unveiling the indictments, Scheibel said numerous faculty members, staff members and administrators at South Hadley High School were aware of the bullying - some even witnessed physical abuse - and did nothing.

She said the investigation looked at whether the adults' failure to help Phoebe amounted to criminal behavior.

"In our opinion, it did not," she said. "Nevertheless, the actions - or inactions - of some adults at the school are troublesome."

hkennedy@nydailynews.com

## RELATED NEWS

### ARTICLES

Former NAACP president Benjamin Hooks, famed civil rights leader, dies

Civil rights leader Dorothy Height dead at 98

Married gay couples have tough time untying the knot

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signs US's toughest immigration law; Obama slams as civil rights threat

Arizona governor vows to implement tough new immigration law

Furor over Arizona's new immigration law continues to grow

powered by **Inform**



- Trend of video tributes following a suicide death
- Obits from several recent young adults suicides in NH mentioned they were IPC fans
- Googled IPC (Insane Clown Posse)
- Song “Suicide Hotline”
- User generated aspects





# Social Networking

- [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)
- [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)
- [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

**facebook** Profile edit Friends ▾ Inbox ▾ home account privacy logout

Search  

**Applications** edit

-  Photos
-  Groups
-  Events
-  Marketplace
-  Causes
-  SuperPoke!

▼ more

**Make \$150 an Hr.**



Register now and earn \$25-100 for each survey you take! Each survey takes approximately 3-5 min!

More Ads | Advertise

**every time i feel bad I WISH I COD SUICIDE** Global

**Information**

**Group Info**  
Type: Just for Fun - Totally Random  
Description: sometimes we all want 2 suicide frm dis shiityyy lifeeee  
i HAAAAATTTEE MY LIFE  
i wanna DIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

**Contact Info**  
Office: dieee  
Street: world of suicide

**Recent News**

there will be national suicide daaayyyy on 1922030

**Photos**  
Displaying 4 of 16 photos [See All](#)



**Videos**

No one has uploaded any videos.

**Posted Items**

No one has posted any items.

**Discussion Board**

There are no discussions.



Join this Group

Share 

**Related Groups**

Feed a Child with just a Click!  
Common Interest - Beliefs & Causes

I ♥ Emos  
Just for Fun - Totally Random  
luv is a chapter in boys lifee while luv in girls life is a whole boook  
Just for Fun - Totally Random  
every girl wants a boy like this..  
Just for Fun - Totally Random  
Let's set and break a Guinness Record!!!! Approved by guinnessworldrecords.c  
Entertainment & Arts - General

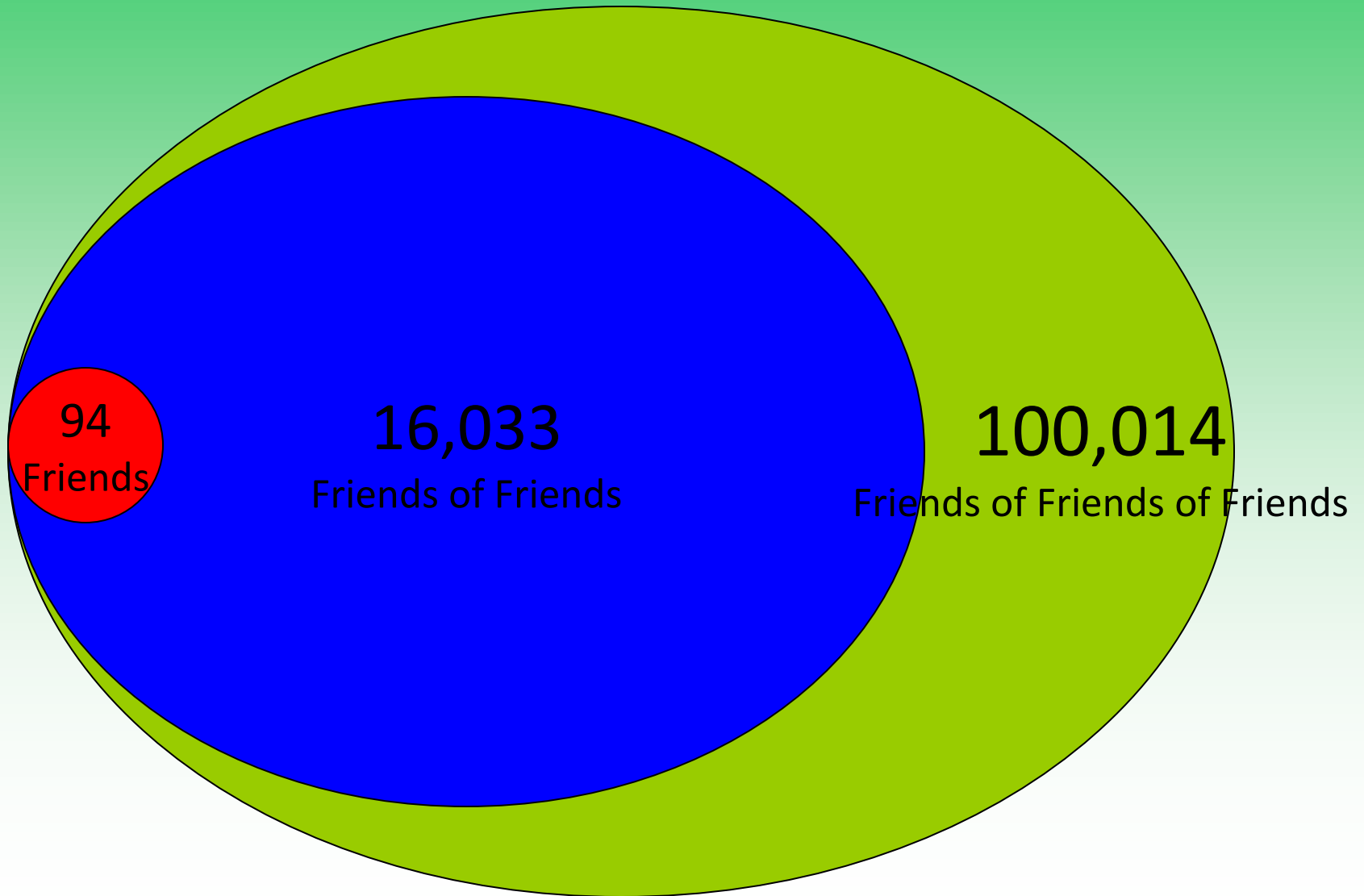
**Group Type**

This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.







**Admins**

- Sundus Abul Shamat (Middle East International School) (creator)

# Scope of Connectivity



# SNS Promoting Connectedness/Belonging

		Facebook 2012	FB 2010	MySpace
	Air Force	1,050,949	60,225	2,429 (2,693)
	Army	1,489,927	127,981	92,186 (95,076)
	Marines	2,550,379	40,949 (205,696)	64,733 (71,403)
	National Guard	1,233,100	210,307	(14,286)
	Navy	617,603	50,351	(9,612)
	Coast Guard	132,398		

# Social Networking Sites/Internet

- Great way to quickly and effectively communicate SP info or events
- Need to be monitored for postings indicating risk
- Most SNS sites have a Get Help function some directly connected with NSPL/MVCL
- Monitor postings of friends after a suicide death.
- Sites can often be deactivated or placed on memorial status when requested by next of kin.
- Recognize that social networking sites can serve as a connected community for survivors.

## Positive Action:

- **Notify others of individuals at risk.**



# Social Networking Sites Intervention



# Points to Consider

- Surveillance of social networking sites after a known suicide can reveal potentially dangerous content for vulnerable individuals.
- Real time intervention via online posts with messages of condolence, information about suicide and resources can counteract inappropriate content.
- Effective suicide prevention strategies must involve up-to-date information technology.



# Social Networking and Grief Expression



## Positives:

- Serves as extended electronic support system
- Not restricted by geographic barriers
- Insures degree of anonymity
- Not time-limited; flexibility in access and readiness of individual to talk about grief
- Can share multimedia content for expression of grief, e.g. photos, audio, video



Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is Here For You! - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.taps.org/

Most Visited Getting Started tps.org Headlines

Tragedy Assistance Program for Surv...

» HOME » CONTACT US » PRESSROOM Online Community Login »

# TAPS

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

800-959-TAPS (8277)  
Providing Comfort 24 Hours a Day

ABOUT US ▾ PROGRAMS ▾ RESOURCES ▾ EVENTS ▾ NEWS/MEDIA ▾ GET INVOLVED ▾ **DONATE**

*Remember the Love, Celebrate the Life,  
Share the Journey*

Welcome to the home of America's front line resource for all who are grieving the death of a loved one serving our country.

We are here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, whether it is just to talk, or meet others with shared experiences and understanding, or to find support and information from our professional network of resources.

- Online Community
- Calendar of Events
- Seminars & Good Grief Camps
- Professional Education
- TAPS Photo Gallery
- Volunteer with TAPS
- Friends of TAPS

2010 Honor Guard Gala

Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp Events

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION  
EARN CREDITS

Suicide Prevention Webinar - January 21

Run and Remember Team

Online Store

Survivor Connections...

In the News...

★ ★ ★

Done

3:00 PM 1/12/2010

# On Line Support



Parents of Suicide  
Friends and Family of Suicide

[www.pos-ffos.com](http://www.pos-ffos.com)

# INTERACTIVE WEB SITES:

## Right to die: Final Exit Network targeted by authorities

**West suburban man's plan to kill himself with right-to-die group's help is on hold**

By Jason George | Tribune reporter

March 17, 2009

Kurt Perry, 26, has a disorder that weakens his extremities and breathing. (Tribune photo by Scott Strazzante / March 10, 2009)

Wanting to be free of a painful disorder that weakens his limbs and breathing, Kurt Perry decided last month it was time to end his life. He picked his place, his method and his death date: Feb. 26, 2009.

It was to be a carefully coordinated event—one the 26-year-old west suburbanite had long planned with the help of Rosalie Guttman and Jerry Dincin, Chicago-area volunteers with Final Exit Network, a right-to-die organization.

For three years, Perry had come to rely on these Final Exit "guides" for emotional support. He also counted on them being present, but not participating, on the Thursday he planned to "hasten his death"—a phrase the group prefers to euthanasia.



On line facilitator of suicide death – news report

[http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/2009-2010/death\\_online/](http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/2009-2010/death_online/)



## Online Talk, Suicides and a Thorny Court Case

By MONICA DAVEY  
Published: May 13, 2010

The seemingly empathetic nurse struck up conversations over the Internet with people who were pondering [suicide](#). She told them what methods worked best. She told some that it was all right to let go, that they would be better in heaven, and entered into suicide pacts with others.

SIGN IN TO  
E-MAIL

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS

SHARE

Enlarge This Image

Robb Long/Associated Press  
William F. Melchert-Dinkel.

Enlarge This Image

Associated Press  
Mark Drybrough at his home in Coventry, England, in 2005.

But the police say the nurse, who sometimes called herself Cami and described herself as a young woman, was actually William F. Melchert-Dinkel, a 47-year-old husband and father from Faribault, Minn., who now stands charged with two counts of aiding suicide.

Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, whose lawyer declined an interview request on his behalf, told investigators that his interest in “death and suicide could be considered an obsession,” court documents say, and that he sought the “thrill of the chase.” While the charges stem from two deaths — one in Britain in 2005 and one in Canada in 2008 — Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, who was indeed a licensed practical nurse, told investigators that he had most likely encouraged dozens of people to kill themselves, court documents said. He said he could not be sure how many had succeeded.

The case, [chilling and ghoulish](#), raises thorny issues in the Internet age, both legal and otherwise. For instance, many states have laws barring assisting suicide, but rarely have cases involved people not in the same room (much less the same country) or the sharing of only words (not guns or pills).

The case also brings up questions about the limits of speech on the Internet: How does one assign levels of culpability to someone who shares thoughts with people who say they are already considering suicide? And for some who counsel against suicide, it points to a growing area for worry, an online world where the most isolated and vulnerable might be touched in a way that they would not have in the past.

Groups that work to prevent suicide compare suicide chat rooms to “pro-ana” sites, Internet sites that portray [anorexia](#) as a lifestyle as opposed to a disease. Anti-suicide advocates say that there has been more than one instance recently where a person killed himself on a Webcam as others watched. [Papyrus](#), a charity in Britain that works to stop young people from killing themselves, says it has tracked 39 cases in that country alone where young people committed suicide after visits to “pro-suicide” chat rooms.

It was the untrained, unpaid Internet sleuthing by Celia Blay, a 65-year-old from a [tiny community](#) in Britain, that helped lead to charges in April against Mr. Melchert-Dinkel. “He was practically invisible,” she said. “I tried to talk to any police I could, and most of them would have nothing to do with it. The first one I talked to told me, ‘If it bothers you, look the other way.’ And that really bothered me, because by then I was pretty sure people had died.”

About four years ago, Ms. Blay, who describes herself as a “computer illiterate,” became friends online with a young, depressed woman who had entered into a suicide pact. Ms. Blay persuaded her not to proceed, but the incident sent Ms. Blay searching for the other member of the pact. It was someone who called herself Li Dao, another screen name that the police later said Mr. Melchert-Dinkel used.

Making inquiries on a Web site aimed at people talking about suicide, Ms. Blay said she found at least half a dozen people who had similar pacts with Li Dao, a name that popped up on all sorts of suicide Web sites. She and a friend uncovered Mr. Melchert-Dinkel’s name and e-mail address after setting up a sting in which her friend posed as someone preparing for suicide and was, she said, approached by Mr. Melchert-Dinkel.

By then, the police in Minnesota say, Mr. Melchert-Dinkel had already aided the suicide of Mark Drybrough, 32, of Coventry, England. A coroner’s report found that Mr. Drybrough, who was suffering from a psychiatric illness, hanged himself from a ladder in his home in July 2005. His computer showed that he had posted a question in a suicide chat room about how to hang oneself without access to something high to tie a rope to, and that Li Dao — Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, the police say — had offered details on how to use a door.

In March 2008, Nadia Kajouji, 18, disappeared from her college in Ottawa. The Canadian authorities investigating her disappearance searched her laptop and discovered that she had been talking online with a person who used the screen name Cami. In e-mail messages, the authorities say, the pair agreed to a pact in which Ms. Kajouji would jump from a bridge into a river (to avoid, at Cami’s suggestion, the police say, creating a mess) and Cami would hang herself a day later. In April 2008, Ms. Kajouji’s body was found in the Rideau River.

Around the same time, Ms. Blay contacted the St. Paul Police Department through an acquaintance in Minnesota. By then, she said, she had grown frustrated with what she described as the authorities’ unwillingness to study the huge file she had amassed with the stories of 20 to 30 people who had been approached online. Over time, she said, she had tried to tell the story to a police department near her home, a member of parliament and even law enforcement in the United States.

TWITTER  
SIGN IN TO  
E-MAIL  
PRINT  
SINGLE PAGE  
REPRINTS  
SHARE

Associated Press  
Nadia Kajouji, 18, disappeared from her college in Ottawa, Canada, in 2008.

Since at least the 1970s, many states have barred assisted suicide, though criminal charges are rarely filed. Physician-assisted suicide is allowed under certain conditions in Oregon and Washington.

In Minnesota, 12 charges of aiding suicide have been brought since 1994, when the state began keeping track, and about half of those have resulted in convictions. That [state’s law](#), a felony, applies to “whoever intentionally advises, encourages or assists” another in taking his or her own life; convictions carry sentences of up to 15 years in prison.

Barbara Coombs Lee, the president of Compassion and Choices, who has advocated for laws like the one in Oregon, said she found it “perfectly appropriate” that Mr. Melchert-Dinkel faces such charges. “This is so egregious, so clearly wrong, that I’ll be very disappointed if [assisted-suicide](#) statutes do not reach this,” she said. “There is a bright line between aid in dying and assisting in suicide like this.”

Still, legal experts suggested that there may be room for challenges. [The Minnesota law itself, some suggested, could be seen as too ambiguous or too broad](#) to include protected speech that falls short of actually leading someone to suicide. The deaths occurred in other jurisdictions, posing potential issues, other lawyers said.

Terry A. Watkins, a lawyer for Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, said it was premature to describe what defense he intends to present but made it clear that he had questions about the law itself, as well as the dissection of causes that lead to any suicide. “As a society, we need to be careful when we start putting together laws that prohibit things like ‘encouragement’ without a really clear definition of what in God’s name you’re talking about,” he said.

Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, who is scheduled to be arraigned on May 25 in Rice County District Court, has had his nursing license revoked. He had held it since 1991, despite a record that included repeated discipline for complaints of leaving a nursing home patient unattended, being too rough, sleeping on duty, failing to take vital signs and failing to track a patient’s medications.

But Mr. Watkins said his client was basically a good person. “This is not a monster,” he said.

Shortly after the police interviewed Mr. Melchert-Dinkel last year, he checked into a local emergency room, state records show, saying that he was dealing with an addiction to suicide Internet sites and feeling guilty over advice he had given to people to end their lives.

“Mr. Melchert-Dinkel, who was indeed a licensed practical nurse, told investigators that he had most likely encouraged dozens of people to kill themselves, court documents said. He said he could not be sure how many had succeeded.”

# Recommendations:

- Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Efforts should include strategies for using/monitoring new media
- If you have an online presence have a plan for moderating and responding to posts of individuals at risk
- We can only counter act negative web influences by having a positive presence





Ken Norton LICSW

(603) 225-5359

[knorton@naminh.org](mailto:knorton@naminh.org)

[www.theconnectproject.org](http://www.theconnectproject.org)



Training Professionals & Communities in  
Suicide Prevention & Response